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# THE HAGUE CONFERENCE AND PALESTINE.

BY THE REV. DR. H. PEREIRA MENDES.

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THE approaching Hague Conference is of deep import to humanity. For the horror of war, the recognition of its crime, cost and curse, the desire to avoid it, are universal.

But a Hague Conference has been held before. And it did not prevent the Japan-Russia war, the crisis between England and Russia through the North Sea blunder of the latter, the tension and preparation of France and Germany over Morocco, nor has it prevented the bubblings in Central America. These show the necessity for a Hague Conference to provide for a permanent and an all-powerful tribunal to prevent wars, to avert crises and to quiet disturbing elements.

The crime of war is that it is the soldier, who has no personal quarrel with the so-called enemy, who is called upon to kill or maim an unoffending man, or who is himself killed or maimed or stricken with disease. If the cabinet ministers, or stockholders, through whose ambition or greed the war is waged were sent to the front first, it would be well. As it is, the soldiers get nothing, whether victors or vanquished; the ministers or stockholders on the winning side gain everything.

The cost of war is demonstrated by the familiar fact that army and navy budgets mean one-third or more of the whole expense of a government, which vast sum otherwise would be saved to the taxpayers; and in addition, it means many hundred thousand brains and pairs of hands taken from manufactures, agriculture and professions, etc.—all consumers, none producers—to the great economic loss of the country.

The curse of war is that it is the widow and orphan who suffer most, and that manhood is defiled and the virility of a nation

is sapped by a pension system which allows able-bodied wage-earners to draw public money for what is supposed to be an ideal beyond price—patriotism!

As the duel has been abolished, so should war be abolished; for war is only a duel between two nations or two sets of allied nations. It means the belief that might makes right. The world has outgrown that belief to-day. Hence war is an anachronism.

The solution of war is war.

Officers and men should refuse to serve outside the boundaries of their country for any cause whatever, until the quarrel has been submitted to a Court of Arbitration. The finding of that Court should be final and all the nations should declare war against the nation which refuses to abide by that Court's decision. The solution of war would be found by this war of all nations against the one that rebelled. History would not be likely to record more than one such war.

The composition of the Court is the serious problem.

If it is composed only of representatives of nations which have political entanglements, alliances, *ententes*, *bunds*, colonies, protectorates, zones, etc., it becomes exposed to all the objections born of bias or interest or historical sentiment. That it must be composed of jurists of all nations seems at present indisputable. But a dominant or a predominant force among those jurists should be exercised by the only nation that has, and can have, no political entanglements, no alliances, *ententes* or *bunds*, no colonies, protectorates or zones. That nation is the Hebrew nation.

I use the word "nation" as a spiritual term.

A nation held together by brute force of autocrat, oligarchy or aristocracy is one thing. A nation held together by mental or intellectual ideals, such as liberty, fraternity or equality, is another and a higher conception.

But a nation which exists only as a spiritual force is another and the highest conception. Such a nation is the Hebrew nation, as conceived by the prophets in that Book of Books which gives all mankind its highest and noblest ideals. That nation was created only in order that "through it all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Thus that Book declares.

Let the approaching Hague Conference open the question of the reconstitution of the Hebrew nation by the great Powers of to-day, even as Belgium and other nations have been reborn with

guaranteed independence. It means a solution of the Near-Eastern question. Suppose it does! That question has to be solved some day. It may as well be met before clashing interests, already potent, grow yet stronger.

Sentimental reasons had much to do with the creation of modern Italy, new Greece and United Germany. Surely, sentimental reasons, numerous enough and potent enough, exist for creating a new Jewish state by restoring Palestine to the Hebrews. History has yet to atone for its pages of injustice, cruelty, persecution, bigotry and hatred exhibited against the race which has been so "despised and rejected of men," which has indeed "known sorrows and has been acquainted with grief." If the nations make this great Atonement and "bring the Hebrews as an offering out of all nations"; if "a nation be born at once," and "kings and their queens nurse it" into strength; if, by combined action of the Great Powers, Palestine be born again, it will be not for the glory of the Hebrews, not for their temporal advantage, but only for the welfare of all humanity.

For this new-born or reborn nation will exist only to use its voice in the councils of the world for the benefit of the world, and, chief among those councils, the International Court of Arbitration. Thus practical utility, besides sentiment, speaks.

The Hebrew nation is the only one that can maintain a judgment or an action unbiassed, by reason of never being hampered by instructions from the home government as to materialities or as to what questions shall or shall not be discussed.

Because its own government, purely spiritual, will have no temporal, no territorial aspirations outside of its limits as ordained by Him who saith: "I made the earth. . . . I give it unto whom it seemeth well to Me," . . . "to thy [Abraham's] seed I have given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." That means Palestine and not an inch beyond.

Therefore, its own government, unhampered by alliances, *ententes*, colonies, protectorates, zones or other entanglements, will never have occasion to issue instructions to its jurists in the International Court of Arbitration to avoid or "to refuse to discuss certain questions" which affect its temporal interests, or "to refuse to submit any dispute to arbitration."

The International Court of Arbitration should be in permanent session, and its duties should be to adjust whatever affects two or

more clashing nations. Resort to the Court must be compulsory and must be enforced, first, by refusal of officers and men to fight until the Court has passed sentence, and, secondly, by combined action of the other nations.

Those alone who have seen war can estimate its devastation. Not the least of its horrors is the fact that men surrender their power of free-will, their liberty of thought, and become mere instruments, blind instruments, to kill and rob,—to kill human beings and to rob a people! Not the least of its horrors is the fact that men calmly pay their quota of taxation to support army and navy of huge size, gregarious carnivora, when a small army and a small navy, joined to small armies and navies of other Powers, would suffice to whip any recalcitrant nation into obedience to the mandate of the International Court of Arbitration. Not the least of its horrors is the fact that a civilization and a chivalry which affect to protect women and children, nevertheless permit war which means widows and orphans innumerable!

The Hague Conference is an immense stride forward. Let another step be taken. Let a permanent tribunal be created, with a good proportion of its jurist-members drawn from a nation unbiassed, and not to be biassed, by any worldly consideration.

And if its locale be changed to Zion, dear and hallowed in the eyes of all the Catholic, Protestant, Greek-Church, Mohammedan and Jewish worlds, the religious or sentimental environment will not be without force. For “out of Zion will go forth law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and He will judge among the nations and will correct many peoples. And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up the sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

The word “soldier,” by its derivation, means merely a “hireling.” That is all he is in many instances. And in all such instances it is well if the word be deprived of some of its glamour of glory.

“*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*” is true only when it is for the country’s honor or liberty, not when it is for the country’s greed or injustice. Soldiers should be thinkers, not mere hirelings, and should have minds of their own.

Not the least part of a Hague Conference is to educate public opinion, and to help soldiers to their rights as thinkers.

H. PEREIRA MENDES.